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MILITARY ROAD TO THE FRONTIER OF CALIFORNIA.

[To accompany S. bill No. 337.]

AUGUST 16, 1856.

Mr. SAPP, from the Committee on Military Affairs, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the Senate bill No. 337, entitled "An act for the construction of a military road from some point in the State of Missouri, via Great Salt Lake City, to Carson Valley settlement, on the frontier of the State of California, for the establishment of military posts, and the sinking of wells thereon," respectfully report:

That the bill is a response to the prayer of a petition signed by seventy thousand of the citizens of the State of California, asking the construction of just such a road as that provided for therein. The petitioners are those who are suffering directly for the want of such a road. They see the isolated position of their State from its sister States in this Union, and experiencing heavily the inconvenience and insecurity to which they are subjected by the present unreliable means of connexion between them and their fellow-citizens of the other States in case of any emergency, have resorted to the great right of petition to arouse Congress to a sense of their condition. The Senate, by this bill, have responded readily to their prayer, and your committee have concluded to recommend that the House unite with the Senate, and by early action insure the construction of this road, of so much importance to the country.

The necessity of some means of communication over our own territory between the Pacific coast and our western frontiers, for the transportation of troops and army supplies, is so obvious that an argument from your committee in favor of such a communication is hardly necessary.

The unsettled condition of things on the Isthmus of Nicaragua, arising from the constant state of revolution in the republic holding dominion over it, the existence of war between the Central American governments, and the frequency of the outrages committed on American citizens passing over the Isthmus of Panama, which two isthmuses form now the only feasible means of communication between our distant Pacific possessions and the States in the east, suggests strongly the propriety of ceasing to rely upon the uncertainty of such means of

communication for military purposes, and argues with great force in favor of a military road across our own territory. Whilst these reasons clearly show the propriety of the road proposed to be constructed by this bill, for the necessities of the military department of the government, it also suggests its usefulness as a means of transit for our citizens, in case of the foreign lines of communication being closed, until a more effective mode of transportation by railroad across the country is built, either by the aid of the government or private enterprise, with such aid for the accommodation as well of the government as the public.

The unsettled condition of our Indian relations in the whole domain west of Missouri necessitating the constant march of troops to and fro between the various military posts to subdue the warlike tribes, and even in time of peace to keep them in subjection to the power of our government, will suggest to any mind how necessary and useful such a road would be for such movements.

The indefensible state of our Pacific possessions in case of a foreign war making them so inviting a prey for foreign conquest, urges forcibly the necessity of a military road for the transportation of troops and supplies across our own territory to their aid and protection in case of such a contingency. In an emergency of that kind it would be futile to rely upon communication over foreign lands subject as our government would be to the caprices of their authorities, and liable, as the troops and supplies would be, to be cut off by the navy of the enemy as soon as they would embark on the Pacific coast. If this road is not built, foreign transits would be the only means of communication, as the marching of an army with supplies across our own territory in its present condition in case of such an emergency would be attended with too much delay, too much subjection to fatality and fatigue, to make it of any use to the defenceless condition of our people on the Pacific. Foreign transits, with all their dangers and uncertainties, would, in that event, be the most convenient of the two unreliable means of communication.

The people of California, fully sensible of their present dependent and defenceless condition, are beginning to show signs of discontent at the condition in which they are left by the general government, and do not hesitate to contemplate, at some future day, the existence of our Pacific territory as an independent empire, feeling, as they do, that it has the resources to make a great and mighty one. This gradually increasing feeling of estrangement it is scarcely necessary to say would be greatly allayed by the passage of this bill, assuring, as it would, our people on the Pacific that the general government has not forgotten the protection it owes to its citizens in the far off West.

As a means of economy it is clearly evident that this bill has great merit. With a good wagon road over a practicable route through our territories the movements of troops would be attended with less expense and danger; it would save the destruction of a great amount of provisions and teams which annually are lost, for the reason that it would mark out a safe and practicable route to the Pacific, and obviate the necessity of adventure and hazard, dictated by the judgment of man, to discover the easiest transit across a wild and exposed country,

where a well known and certainly safe line of communication is not marked out.

Whilst the committee base their recommendation of this road entirely on its military necessity, they think that the beneficial results which would flow from it in other points of view should not be lost sight of. No one can doubt that as soon as this road is located and its construction is commenced, the eye of enterprise and emigration will be directed to its advantages. The public lands along its line, and contiguous thereto, will rapidly be taken up by the hardy pioneers, and the initiation of a condition of things which will at no distant day convert our present uninviting territory lying between the Pacific and our western frontier into desirable locations for settlement will then have taken place.

For these reasons the committee report in favor of the appropriation embraced in the bill of the Senate.

That section of the bill authorizing the establishment of military posts and the sinking of wells along the line of the road recommends itself to the favor of the House, for it is obvious that the road would be useless without water to supply the troops and teams passing over it and military posts, having at each a small military force to insure protection to whatever passes over it without the aid of a military escort.

The committee believing that the location by the Senate of the eastern termini of said road in the State of Missouri might induce a question as to the power of Congress to build any part of said road within a sovereign State, they have concluded to disburden it of such an embarrassment and to change said termini to the western boundary of Missouri. Other necessary amendments occurring to your committee, they recommend the passage of the accompanying bill in lieu of that of the Senate.